

Dear Members of the Education Committee and General Assembly,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on **H. B. 6880 AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.**

My testimony is regarding sections 1, 6, and 7:

Section 1: Requesting clarifying language be added to the proposal.

i. For the posting of “associated curriculum materials” – What is the definition of an associated curriculum material? Sheet music, wood in shop, math manipulatives, recipes in culinary courses, lab experiments? The proposal does not contain language pertaining to copyright, redistribution permissions, and/or licensing agreements. How would the committee propose to address instances where there are limitations on redistribution? The effective date of July 1, 2023 would be very tight depending on the definition.

ii. This section requires a standing agenda item at each regular and special meeting of the Board, even if said curriculum is not on the agenda for those meetings. One thing when noticed for updates, review, and adoption as valued public input, but looking to clarify the intent here is in fact to mandate a standing agenda item on curriculum at every Board meeting?

There is business to conduct and a lot of it for Boards at both regular and special meetings. Completely value public comment at the time of updates, changes, review, and adoption of all matters before our Boards, as well as town hall style formats periodically scheduled in the year for greater open dialogue and conversation, however standing agenda items that are devoid of the business of the day on every meeting agenda will impede conducting the important business of Boards. Outside of the update, review, and adoption meetings, any interim concerns can be shared with the Superintendent and/or the Board to address in an ongoing matter via email, phone call, town hall meeting, etc., as well as during district improvement plan updates, student achievement presentations, and other opportunities that occur throughout the year.

Special meetings have their own limitations on business that can be conducted and FOIA requirements. A standing agenda item for special meetings would seem to contraindicate the purposes of special meetings, inclusive of executive sessions.

Example: A quorum of a Board of Education has posted a meeting agenda to tour a school facility up for a construction project. Time and space inside of that building would need to be designated to hear the required curriculum public comment that is not the business of the meeting during the tour time and allow for members of the public to enter the building for such a purpose. Same for awards ceremonies and whole host of possible meeting spaces and purposes. Let’s be mindful of all the circumstances and locations this language would be applicable to.

Section 6: *“The Department of Education shall study the fiscal impact to the state and to local and regional school districts of the implementation of a school voucher program in which the amount of the per pupil average of the state education cost-sharing grant received by a school district for the school year commencing in 2022, using the October 2023 student census, would follow a child for the payment of tuition and fees at an approved nonpublic school.”*

i. Why is this study limited to the fiscal impact? There is no language that pertains to including in the study requiring non-public institutions to meet all the same requirements as public schools

who are in receipt of such funds in regards to curriculum, open admissions, state testing, inclusion in the public school information system, accountability index, teacher certifications, etc.

- ii. Why is ECS the suggested funding source here? If the state wishes to start funding private school tuition, then you can create a new fund to do so.

Since the proposed language is currently based upon *“the amount of the per pupil average of the state education cost-sharing grant received by a school district for the school year commencing in 2022, using the October 2023 student census”*, the study therefore excludes students across the state who are not counted in the ECS formula who currently attend non-public schools and is limited to students attending public school. If the intent was otherwise, to include all students, then a new amount would have to be calculated that is not based on the October 1 enrollment count or ECS grant amount of the year prior. There are also no caps included here so in reality this proposal seeks to transfer up to 100% of a districts ECS grant, however small or large that is, to non-public schools. The language also affords the potential to create operating budget deficits if the foundation amount is greater than the ECS received by a district.

ECS should not be the source of funding in this study for the reasons stated above and there are already enrollment and average daily membership counts included in the various formulas and calculations.

- iv. Once this money follows the student, as proposed, then the same advocacy I’ve stated under similar bills applies here: Receive the money, fulfill all responsibility for that school year due to the October 1 count issue still being used for funding calculations forward. We need to enact a June 1 reconciliation in our formulas if we are to continue with in year flow and to properly account for students educated during the year.

Section 7: Understood the provision for 30 minutes instead of 20 minutes for lunch may be well intended. The State has not changed the required school days or hours of actual school work since the 80’s. Yet year after year you add more and more requirements onto the same timeframe. This 10 minutes across 180 days equates to 30 hours of lost time to meet your own requirements and aspirations for our students and the expectations upon our educators. That equates to 390 hours of less time over the course of a K-12 education. I do not see a provision in section 7 that would require the Legislature, the State Board of Education, and districts to reduce 390 hours of requirements from the statutes to meet this less time. Let us not discuss achievement gaps, stress, teacher shortages, SEL, or any other matter of concern when proposing less time to do more every year.

10-16 Length of School Year affords up to 360 hours differential between districts in actual school work (900 hours minimum to 1260 maximum) each year. Over a K-12 career that is a statutorily possible variance of 4680 hours of actual school work between those who receive the minimum of 5 hours per day (900/180) afforded in statute and those who utilize the maximum of 7 hours per day, and that doesn’t account for the fact that CT allows for less than a full day of school to actually count as a full day. 180 days is not equivalent to 180 full days.

There are districts, based on their instructional hours report, would fall below the 900 hours of actual school work due to this provision. Where should the time be made up? Why not 10 minutes per day, 30 hours per year, and 390 hours across K-12 more of art, or music, or recess, versus this?

The presumption here is this time exists to be cut from something, but you don't make any reductions to your requirements/standards/outcomes expectations/assessments in the proposal to accommodate the reduction of year over year time, or concurrently require the addition of time to the school day.

Suggestion: Strike this language from the bill, or include 390 less hours of content and have that flow to reduced time and content on the required state assessments, or look to amend the 900 hours of instruction each year in 10-16 for all of the additions since 1983 in addition to this reduction of accumulated time

What would be valuable is a study of all the state requirements and how much time each of those require to be met before adding more to the list while simultaneously proposing to reduce time.

Thank you for your consideration,
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